



## **DECENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF ETHNIC COHESION: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE IMPACT OF PROPOSED KALMUNAI ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT IN SRI LANKA**

Athambawa Sarjoon<sup>1</sup>

Correspondence: sarjoona@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Decentralization also improve cohesion among different ethnic, religious and communal groups in a plural societal context. Within a territory fragmented on ethnic, religion or communal lines, the spatial division of administrative areas, the establishment of separate decentralized institutions for those areas, and the empowerment of human and physical resources to those institutions would not only help to proper delivery of public services but also to strengthen groups' relations in their daily interactions to access goods and services by recognizing differences and diversity of interests among the population. This study has examined the possibilities of improving cohesion among different ethnic groups with the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai administrative district in South-Eastern region of Sri Lanka. Through reviewing existing literatures, analyzing the perspectives of different ethnic groups, and observing the trends of ethnic politics in the region, this study has found that the establishment of the proposed administrative district can result in benefiting the multi-ethnic communities living in the region in different ways. The proposed Kalmunai administrative district has also been advocated on diversity accommodative and conflict resolution motives of decentralization. However, the study has identified that the impact towards improving cohesion among different ethnic groups within the proposed district would be minimal and highly challengeable unless the initiatives taken for the proper implementation of existing policies and laws, rational distribution of resources, accommodation of minority rights and interests in district administration, and the empowerment of civil society for co-existence at the regional level. The study urges the importance of intellectual discourses on the subject matters and the necessity of the proposed administrative district on rational group at civil society and political levels, together with the rational justification of the proposed district at national level.

**Keywords:** Decentralized administration, ethnic cohesion, ethnic division, ethnic politics, Proposed Kalmunai district, Sri Lanka.

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya 20400, Sri Lanka.